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R. S. Ellis Roberts.



MONNA VANNA



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BY

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

TRANSLATED BY

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LONDON

GEORGE ALLEN, 156, CHARING CROSS ROAD

1904

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Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
At the Ballantyne Press

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This version of "Monna Vanna" advances no claim to absolute literalness. It has been prepared for stage presentation ; and certain expressions, perfectly inoffensive in the original, have been modified, brought into line with English ways of speech. There are words in our language that, to use Mr. Meredith's phrase, "for the sake of dignity, blush to be named," and such blushes may fitly be spared when a paraphrase is ready to hand. It remains only to be said that M. Maeterlinck's work, pure and lofty throughout, has been altered only at most immaterial points ; and that no alteration whatever has been made without the full approval of the author.



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CHARACTERS

GUIDO COLONNA, *Commander of the Pisan garrison*

MARCO COLONNA, *Guido's father*

PRINZIVALLE, *General in the pay of Florence*

TRIVULZIO, *Commissioner of the Florentine Republic*

BORSO, } *Guido's lieutenants*
TORELLO, }

VEDIO, *Secretary to Prinzivalle*

GIOVANNA (MONNA VANNA), *Guido's wife*

PERIOD—*The end of the Fifteenth Century*

*The first and third Acts take place in Pisa ; the
second outside the city*

MONNA VANNA

ACT I

A Room in the Palace of GUIDO COLONNA.

[GUIDO *and his lieutenants, BORSO and TORELLO, are standing by an open window, from which there is a view of the country around Pisa.*

GUIDO.

Our present extremity is so great that the Seigniorie have been compelled to reveal to me disasters they had long kept back. The two armies that Venice despatched to our relief are both hemmed in by the Florentines; the one at Bibbiena, the other at Elci. Chiusi, Montalone, the passes of the Vernia, Arezzo, and the defiles of the Casentine—these are all held by the enemy. We are isolated and helpless, given over to the hatred of Florence; and Florence is unforgiving when she no longer

trembles. Our soldiers, the people, are still unaware of these disasters, but strange rumours are afoot, and daily becoming more definite. What will the Pisans do, when they learn the truth? Their rage will turn upon us, upon the Seigniory; we shall be the first to fall victim to their terror and blind despair. They have endured so much, during this long siege, that has lasted more than three months; they have borne their suffering so heroically, that it need not surprise us if famine and misery goad them now to madness. One hope was left to them; that is gone, and, with it, the last vestige of our authority. We shall be powerless. The enemy will batter down our walls, and Pisa cease to be. . . .

BORSO.

My men have shot their last arrow; their ammunition is spent. One may search the vaults from end to end without finding an ounce of powder. . . .

TORIELLO.

We fired our last cannon ball two days ago at the batteries of Sant' Antonio; and even

the Stradiotes, who now have nothing left but their swords, refuse to man the ramparts. . . .

BORSO.

From this window the breach can be seen that Prinzivalle's cannon have made in our walls. . . . It is fifty paces wide, a flock of sheep could pass through. . . . The place is untenable; and the Romagnians, the Sclavonians, and the Albanians, have signified their intention to desert in a body, should the capitulation not be signed to-night. . . .

GUIDO.

Thrice within the last ten days have the Seignior sent ancients of the College to treat for capitulation. These have none of them returned. . . .

TORELLO.

Prinzivalle does not forgive us the murder of his lieutenant, Antonio Reno, whom the frenzied peasants hacked to death in our streets. Florence avails herself of this murder to proclaim us outside the law, and treat us as barbarians. . . .

GUIDO.

I have sent my own father to Prinzivalle to express our profound regret, and explain how powerless we were to control a mob whom hunger had driven frantic. My father was a sacred hostage. He has not yet returned. . . .

BORSO.

For more than a week now the city has lain open, and exposed on every side; our walls are a mass of ruin, our cannon silent. Why does Prinzivalle not give the order for assault? Can it be that his courage has failed him, or does he dread some ambush? Florence, perhaps, may have sent mysterious orders. . . .

GUIDO.

The orders of Florence are ever mysterious, but her designs are clear. Pisa, by her unswerving loyalty to Venice, has set a dangerous example to the little Tuscan cities; the Republic of Pisa, therefore, must cease to be. . . . Florence has displayed rare artifice and cunning.

She has contrived, little by little, to embitter this war, to poison it with strange acts of treachery and cruelty, that shall be held to warrant her pitiless revenge. It is not without cause that I suspect her emissaries of having incited our peasants to massacre Reno. So, too, was it part of her scheme to entrust this siege to Prinzivalle, the most barbarous mercenary in her employ—the man who won for himself such sinister fame at the sack of Placenza, where he put every man who bore arms to the sword—though he declared later this was done against his orders!—and sold five thousand free women into slavery. . . .

BORSO.

Such is the report, I know, but it is not correct. It was not Prinzivalle, but the Florentine Commissioners, who were responsible both for the massacre and the sale. I have never seen Prinzivalle, but one of my brothers knew him well. He is of barbarian origin. His father would seem to have been a Basque or a Breton, who kept a goldsmith's shop in Venice. He is undoubtedly of humble birth, but still not the

savage that people hold him. From what I hear he is a dangerous creature, of dissolute habits, fantastic and violent, but, for all that, loyal; and I would unhesitatingly hand him my sword. . . .

GUIDO.

Wait till your arm can no longer wield it! And very soon now he will be stirring, and show us what he is! In the meanwhile we have one chance left: such of us, at least, as dare to meet death bravely, and to look it in the face. . . . We must tell the whole truth to the soldiers, the citizens, and the peasants who have found shelter in our walls. They shall learn that no offer of capitulation has been made to us; and that we have not here one of those mimic wars in which two great armies fight from dawn to sunset, leaving three wounded on the field; not a fraternal siege that ends by the victor becoming the guest and the valued friend of the vanquished. This is a bitter struggle for life or death; a struggle in which no mercy is shown; in which our wives and our children . . .

Enter MARCO. GUIDO sees him and rushes eagerly to embrace him.

GUIDO.

Father! . . . By what happy miracle, what stroke of good fortune in this calamity of ours, have you been restored to us, when I had almost given up hope. . . . You are not wounded? You drag your foot behind you! Have they tortured you? How did you escape? What have they done to you?

MARCO.

Nothing. They are not barbarians, thank God! They received me as an honoured guest. Prinzi-alle had read my works; he spoke to me of the three dialogues of Plato, that I had found and translated. I am lame, it is true, but then I had far to go, and I am very old. . . . Do you know whom I met in Prinzi-alle's tent?

GUIDO.

The merciless Commissioners from Florence!

MARCO.

Yes, they were there—or, at least, one of them, for I saw only one. . . . But the first name I heard was that of Marsilio Ficino, the man who revealed Plato to the world. . . . Plato would seem to live again in Marsilio Ficino. . . . I would have given ten years of my life to see him, before going whither all must go. . . . We were like two brothers who had come together at last. . . . We spoke of Hesiod, of Homer, Aristotle. . . . Close to the camp, beside the banks of the Arno, he had unearthed, in a grove of olive, the torso of a goddess that had lain buried in the sand: it was so strangely beautiful that if you saw it you would forget the war. We dug on a little further; he found an arm, and I two hands. . . . These hands were so pure, so delicate, that one fancied them formed to create happy laughter, to sprinkle the dew or caress the dawn. . . . One was curved tenderly, as though it had lain against a woman's breast; the other still was clasping the handle of a mirror. . . .

GUIDO.

Father, father! Let us not forget that, here, people are perishing of hunger, and have little to do with delicate hands, or bronze torsos!

MARCO.

This one is of marble. . . .

GUIDO.

Be it so! But let us speak rather of the thirty thousand lives to whom a moment's delay, a single imprudent act, spells ruin; whereas a word could save them: a whisper of good news. . . . It was not for a torso or a mutilated hand that you went yonder! What did they say to you? What designs has Florence, or Prinzivalle? Tell us quickly! Why do they dally with us? Do you hear those shouts underneath our window? The poor wretches are fighting for the grass that has grown between the stones. . . .

MARCO.

You are right. I was forgetting that men were at war with each other now that spring is here, and the glad sky smiling upon the earth, and the sea stretching towards the blue like a radiant cup that a goddess presents to the gods of heaven; and the earth so fair and so full of love for men! . . . But you have your joys; I dwell too long on mine. . . . Besides, you are right. I should have told you at once the news that I bring. . . . I bear a message fraught with salvation to thirty thousand lives, and with heavy affliction to one. . . . But this one may find therein most noble occasion for glory, of a kind that seems greater to me than all the glories of war. . . . Love for one person is good, and brings its own happiness; but the love that embraces the many is greater and finer still. . . . Virtues that all men admire are good; yet there come days when our eye travels beyond them, and then their value seems less. . . . Listen! . . . And prepare yourself for what I have to say, lest my first words should wring from you one

of those oaths that bar our retreat, and enchain the reason that fain would retrace her steps. . . .

GUIDO.

(Dismissing his officers with a gesture.) Leave us!

MARCO.

No! Remain. . . . It is our fate, the fate of us all, that we are about to decide! Indeed, I could wish that this room overflowed with the victims whom we shall save! That all the poor wretches to whom we bring comfort might be at the window there, to hear and retain for ever the tidings I bring; for I bring salvation, if reason will but accept it! Nor could ten thousand reasons turn the scale against one overpowering error, whereof I fear the weight the more, inasmuch as I myself . . .

GUIDO.

Have done with enigmas, father, I entreat you! What can this matter be that calls for so many words? Tell us all! There is nothing can frighten us now!

MARCO.

Be it so, then! Listen! I saw Prinzivalle; I have had speech with him. . . . It is strange how false is the picture men draw of one whom they hold in dread. . . . I went to him as Priam to the tent of Achilles. I thought to meet a drunken, blood-stained savage—a madman whose only quality was a certain talent for war. . . . For as such had he always been represented to me. . . . I expected to find the incarnate fiend of battle, headstrong and incoherent, vain, debauched, treacherous, cruel. . . .

GUIDO.

And all this is Prinzivalle, save that he be no traitor!

BORSO.

Nay, traitor he is not; and, though he serve Florence, his loyalty is unstained. . . .

MARCO.

The man I met bowed down before me as though he had been my disciple, and I the

master whom he revered. He is learned, studious, wise, eager in search of knowledge. He listens patiently, and his eyes are open to all things that are beautiful. He is humane and generous, and has no liking for war; he is conscientious and sincere, the reluctant servant of a perfidious Republic. The hazards of life—destiny, it may be—made him a soldier, and hold him captive still to a glory that he detests, and fain would abandon, but not before he has gratified a desire; a fearful desire, such as would seem to fall on some men who are born beneath the perilous star of a great, unique, and unrealisable love. . . .

GUIDO.

Father, father, you forget that men who are dying of hunger can ill brook this delay! What are this man's qualities to us? You speak of salvation; give us the word you promised!

MARCO.

It is true. I do wrong to hesitate; for cruel as this thing may be to the two creatures I love best of all on this earth . . .

GUIDO.

. My share I accept, though it be what it may ;
but who is the other ?

MARCO.

Listen, I will. . . . As I entered this room it
seemed strange and difficult to me ; and yet the
chance of salvation was so overwhelming. . . .

GUIDO.

Speak !

MARCO.

Florence is determined on our annihilation.
The decemvirs of war have judged it necessary,
the Seigniory have approved their decree ; the
decision is irrevocable. But Florence is too
prudent, too wise in her hypocrisy, to allow
the world that she is civilising to lay the
charge of indiscriminate bloodshed at her door.
She will declare, therefore, that we refused
the merciful capitulation she had offered. The
city will be taken by assault ; Spanish and
German mercenaries will be hurled against

her. And these need no urging, when there is chance of pillage or burning, of rapine or slaughter! One has only to loosen the muzzle; and the leaders, that day, will take care to seem helpless, to have lost all control. . . . Such is the fate held in store for us; and the city of the red lily will be the first to deplore the disaster, and will ascribe it wholly to the unforeseen licence of the foreign mercenaries, whom she will disband with every expression of horror, so soon as our ruin shall enable her to dispense with their services. . . .

GUIDO.

Yes. That is the way of Florence. . . .

MARCO.

Such are the private instructions that Prin-zivalle has received from the Commissioners of the Republic. Day after day, through this last week, they have urged him to deliver the final assault. Hitherto he has delayed it under various pretexts. Further, he has intercepted letters wherein the Commissioners, who spy upon his every movement, accuse him of

treachery to the Seigniory. Pisa destroyed, and the war over, condemnation, torture, and death await him in Florence, as they have awaited more than one dangerous general. So that he knows his fate. . . .

GUIDO.

Very well then, what does he propose ?

MARCO.

He is certain—as far, at least, as one can be certain where these shifty savages are concerned—of a fair proportion of the archers, whom he himself enrolled. But, in any event, he has a bodyguard of a hundred men, who are devoted to him; and on these he can absolutely rely. His proposal is that all who may choose to follow him shall be brought into Pisa, and help to defend her against the army he will abandon. . . .

GUIDO.

It is not men we need; and these dangerous auxiliaries do not tempt us. Let him give us bullets, provisions, powder.

MARCO.

He foresaw that his offer might appear suspicious to you, and perhaps be rejected. He will undertake, therefore, to pass into the city a convoy of three hundred waggons, laden with ammunition and food, that have just entered his camp.

GUIDO.

How can he do this?

MARCO.

I know not. The ways of war and politics are strange to me. But he does what he will. . . . The Florentine Commissioners notwithstanding, he is absolute master in his camp so long as the Seigniory have not removed him from his command. And this they dare not do on the eve of victory, in the midst of an army that has faith in him, and already clutches its prey. Florence must wait her hour!

GUIDO.

Good, I understand ; he saves us that he may save himself. He seeks revenge. But this, I imagine, could be achieved in other fashions, and more skilfully too. What can his interest be in saving his enemies? Whither will he go, and what will become of him? What does he demand in return?

MARCO.

The moment has come, my son, when words turn cruel and all-powerful, when two or three syllables suddenly borrow the force of destiny, and fasten upon their victims. . . . I tremble when I think that the sound of my voice, the way in which I may say what has to be said, can cause so many deaths, or save so many lives. . . .

GUIDO.

Why do you hesitate? . . . The cruellest words can add nothing to such a misfortune as ours. . . .

MARCO.

I have told you that Prinzivalle seems wise; that he is reasonable, humane. . . . But where is the man so wise as to have no moment of folly; so virtuous as never to have harboured some monstrous idea within him? . . . Are not our reason, our pity and justice, for ever at war with desire, with passion, with the madness that lies so near to our soul? . . . I, myself, have succumbed more than once, and I shall again, and so, perhaps, will you. . . . For it happens thus with us all! A sorrow awaits you that should be no sorrow perhaps, could you consider it rightly. . . . And I who see so clearly its lack of proportion to the wrong that will cause it, I, for my part, have made a promise still more foolish than is this foolish sorrow. . . . And my foolish promise will be foolishly kept by the sage I fain would be; the sage who ventures to speak in the name of reason. . . . Should you reject this offer, I have undertaken to return to the enemy's camp. . . . And what will await me there? Death and torture will probably be the reward

of my absurd loyalty. . . . And none the less I shall go. . . . Tell myself as I may that I am merely tricking out folly in purple that I may delude myself, I still shall do the foolish thing I deplore; for I, also, lack the strength that he must possess who would listen to reason alone. . . . But I have not yet told you. Ah, see how I lose my thread, how I weave phrase after phrase, pile word upon word, to retard, be it ever so little, the moment that must decide! But I wrong you perhaps, by my doubts. . . . See then! This mighty convoy that my own eyes have beheld; these waggons laden with corn and wine and fruit; these flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, enough, and more than enough, to feed a people for weeks; these barrels of powder and bars of lead with which Florence may be overcome and prosperity brought back to Pisa; all these shall be introduced this very night into our city if you will send in exchange and deliver to Prinzivalle—and she shall return with the first rays of dawn—but he demands in token of victory and submission, that she come alone, and clad only in her mantle. . . .

GUIDO.

Who? Who is to go? You have not told me. . . .

MARCO.

Giovanna.

GUIDO.

What! My wife? . . . Vanna? . . .

MARCO.

Yes, your Vanna. . . . At last I have said it!

GUIDO.

But, why Vanna? Are there not a thousand women?

MARCO.

It is because she is the most beautiful, and he loves her. . . .

GUIDO.

He loves her! . . . Where has he seen her? He does not know her!

MARCO.

He has seen her. He knows her, but would not say when or how. . . .

GUIDO.

But she, has she seen him? Where have they met?

MARCO.

She has never seen him, or, at least, she does not remember. . . .

GUIDO.

How do you know this?

MARCO.

She told me herself. . . .

GUIDO.

What!

MARCO.

Before I came here to you. . . .

GUIDO.

And you told her ?

MARCO.

All. . . .

GUIDO.

What! you cannot have dared to hint at this infamous bargain ?

MARCO.

Yes. . . .

GUIDO.

And she said ? . . .

MARCO.

Nothing. . . . Her face grew white: she left me. . . .

GUIDO.

Ah, she did well! . . . That was better perhaps than loading you with reproaches, and throwing herself at your feet. . . . Yes, that was better. . . . She turned white and left

you. . . . So would an angel have done; that is like Vanna. . . . What was there to say? Nothing! And we, too, shall say nothing. . . . Come, my friends, we will return to the ramparts, and die, at least, since die we must, without staining ourselves with dishonour. . . .

MARCO.

Ah, Guido, the ordeal is terrible, I know! Now that the blow has fallen let us be patient, and give reason time to discriminate between duty and private sorrow! . . .

GUIDO.

Duty! My duty is clear. Your monstrous offer entails one duty on me, and one duty alone. I need no time to reflect.

MARCO.

And yet must you ask yourself whether you have a right to sacrifice a whole people; whether thousands of lives be not too high a price to pay. . . . Did your happiness alone depend on this choice I could understand your preferring death; though to me who

am near the end of life; to me who have seen many men and therefore much human sorrow, to me there can be no moral or physical evil that is not preferable to death, cold and horrible death, with its eternal silence. . . . And here many thousands of lives are at stake; here your brothers in arms are concerned, their wives and children! . . . If you yield to a madman's frenzy, then the thing that seems monstrous to you shall be called heroic by those who come after. For they will judge with calmer eyes, with more justice, and more humanity. . . . Believe me, nothing can equal the saving of life. Virtues, ideals, all that we know as honour and loyalty, are mere trifles compared with that. . . . You would seek to pass through this ordeal like a hero, unstained; but it is wrong to believe that death is the loftiest peak of heroism. . . . The most heroic deed is the one that costs us most, and death is often far easier than life. . . .

GUIDO.

Are you my father ?

MARCO.

Yes, and proud to be your father. . . . In opposing you to-day I oppose myself also, and I should love you less did you submit too readily. . . .

GUIDO.

Yes, you are my father, you have given your proof; for you, too, shall choose death for your share; and since I reject this loathsome compact, you shall return to the enemy's camp, and there meet the fate that Florence reserves for you. . . .

MARCO.

My son, here I alone am concerned—a feeble and useless old man, with few years to live, a man of no value to any—and therefore did I tell myself that I might still humour an ancient folly, nor struggle to do what I know should be done if one indeed sought to be wise. . . . I know not why I shall go yonder. . . . My soul has remained too young in this old body of mine; and I belong to a

time in which reason had little to say. . . .
But I regret that so many influences of the
past should keep me from breaking a foolish
promise. . . .

GUIDO.

I shall act like you. . . .

MARCO.

What do you mean ?

GUIDO.

I shall follow your example. I, too, shall
remain faithful to those influences of the past
that you now regard as absurd, though you
fortunately still permit them to govern your
conduct. . . .

MARCO.

Where others are concerned I cast them
from me; and since it appears that your
soul demands my encouragement, demands
the poor sacrifice of my word, then I re-
nounce in my heart the fulfilment of my
promise, and, come what may, and decide
as you will, I shall not return yonder. . . .

GUIDO.

Enough! There are things a son must not say to an erring father. . . .

MARCO.

Say what you would, my son: let your indignant words flow freely from your heart. . . . I shall regard them as the token of your most legitimate grief. . . . Words cannot alter my love for you. . . . But, while cursing me, let reason and gentle pity take the place in your soul of the maledictions that leave it. . . .

GUIDO.

Enough: I will hear no more. . . . Think; and try to consider what it is you would have me do. For at this moment it is you who are lacking in reason, in noble and lofty reason; you whose wisdom is troubled by the fear of death. . . . Death does not frighten me. . . . I can still remember the time when you enjoined courage upon me, before your own

was weakened by age and the vain study of books. . . . We are alone in this room. No one has beheld your pitiful weakness; and my two lieutenants and I will keep the secret that we shall, alas, not have to keep very long. We shall bury all this in our hearts; and now let us turn our thoughts to the final struggle. . . .

MARCO.

Nay, my son, buried it cannot be; for years, and the studies that you deem so vain, have taught me that it can never be right, whatever the reason, to bury the life of a single man; and though I indeed should no longer possess the courage that alone finds favour in your eyes, I still have another, less dazzling, perhaps, less highly esteemed by men, since it achieves less, and men admire most that which brings suffering to them. . . . This will enable me to accomplish the rest of my duty. . . .

GUIDO.

And what may that duty be?

MARCO.

I shall complete what I have so unsuccessfully begun. . . . You were one of the judges, but not the only judge; and all those whose life or death hangs on this hour have a right to know their fate, and to be told upon what their salvation depends. . . .

GUIDO.

I do not understand you. At least, I hope I do not. You were saying . . .

MARCO.

That on leaving this room I shall at once inform the people of the offer that Prinzivalle has made and you have rejected. . . .

GUIDO.

It is well! Now I understand. I regret that idle words should have brought us to this, as I regret also that your delusions should compel me to be wanting in the respect that is due to your age. . . . But it is a son's duty to protect a deluded father against himself;

and while Pisa stands I am master here, and the custodian of her honour. . . . Borso and Torello, I entrust my father to your care, until such time as his conscience shall reawaken within him. Nothing has happened! . . . No one shall know. . . . Father, I forgive you; and you will forgive me, too, when, at the last hour, you remember how you once taught me to become master of myself, and unafraid. . . .

MARCO.

I have no need to wait for the last hour in order to forgive you, my son. . . . I should have acted like you. . . . And you may imprison me, but not my secret; for that is free, and can no longer be stifled. . . .

GUIDO.

What is this? What is this you say?

MARCO.

That at this very moment Prinzivalle's proposal is being discussed by the Seigniory. . . .

GUIDO.

The Seigniory! Who can have told them?

MARCO.

I told them before I came here. . . .

GUIDO.

You! No. No, it is impossible! However great your fear, or the havoc that age has wrought in your heart, you cannot have delivered the one joy of my soul, my love, the purity and beauty of our wedded life, into the hands of strangers, miserable shopkeepers, who would weigh it and measure it as though it were salt or oil! . . . I cannot believe it. . . . I shall not, till my own eyes have seen it. . . . And then I shall look upon you, you the father whom I loved and thought I knew, whom I took as my model, I shall look on you with no less horror and hatred than I do on the vile and cowardly monster who has besmirched us to-day with all this infamy!

MARCO.

You speak truly, my son. You do not know me; and for that I am to blame. When old age came upon me I did not tell you what I learned from it every day concerning life and love, and the joys and sorrows of men. . . Had I acquainted you sooner with all that was passing in my heart, with all the vanities that were slowly departing, and the truths that were taking their place, then should I not be standing before you to-day like some unhappy stranger whom you are beginning to hate. . . .

GUIDO.

At least I rejoice that I did know you sooner. . . . And for the rest . . . it is not difficult to foretell what the Seigniorship will decide. To save themselves they have only to sacrifice one man, and it is so simple! Such a temptation would bend a nobler courage than one has the right to expect from these poor traders. And yet, let them beware! That is asking too much. That is more than they have a right to ask. I have shed my blood for them; by day and by night have I toiled and endured; through

this whole long siege I have never spared myself. But that is enough: and I will do no more! Vanna is mine! She belongs to me, and I am yet in command! My Stradiotes will at least remain faithful; I have three hundred men who will listen to me alone, and turn a deaf ear to the counsels of cowards!

MARCO.

You are in error, my son. The Seigniory of Pisa, the citizens whom you speak of so slightly, before even knowing what their decision may be, have in this crisis given proof of an admirable nobility and courage. They have refused to owe their safety to the sacrifice of a woman's love; and as I left them and hastened to you, they were summoning Vanna, to tell her that they placed in her hands the fate of the city. . . .

GUIDO.

What! They have dared! In my absence, they have dared to repeat to her the foul words of that loathsome satyr! . . . My Vanna! . . . When I think of her tender face, that takes fire at a glance, of the watchful modesty, that

renders her beauty lovelier still! My Vanna to have stood before these lecherous old men, these little pale-faced hypocritical traders, who have always regarded her as something holy! "Go," they will have said to her, "go yonder, naked and alone, to the barbarian's tent! Do his bidding!" Ah truly, it was noble indeed that they used no violence! They knew that I am still here. They ask *her* consent, you say! And mine—who will dare ask mine?

MARCO.

Have I not done so, my son? And if you refuse me they will come in their turn. . . .

GUIDO.

Let them! Vanna will have spoken for us both. . . .

MARCO.

I trust that it may be so, and that you will accept her answer. . . .

GUIDO.

Her answer! Can you doubt it, you who know her, who have seen her every day

since the one, when, with smiles of love in her eyes, she first crossed the threshold of this very room, in which now you wish to sell her? You doubt her answer? . . .

MARCO.

My son, each of us sees only in others what he sees in himself, and knows himself only to the extent of his own consciousness. . . .

GUIDO.

That is doubtless why I knew you so ill! But rather than that these eyes of mine should a second time be so cruelly deceived, I would pray God that they be closed for ever!

MARCO.

They may be about to open, my son, beneath a very great light. . . . I say this because I have noticed a certain strength in Vanna that you have not seen, and it is this that leaves me in no doubt as to what her reply will be. . . .

GUIDO.

You have no doubt! Ah, believe me, neither have I! And I accept her reply in advance, blindly, irrevocably! If it be not the same as mine, then have we both been deceived in each other from the very first hour unto this one of sorrow. . . . And our love will have been a mere lie, that now crumbles to dust; and all I adored in her will have existed only in this poor credulous head of mine, in this poor faithful heart that knew of one happiness only and worshipped a phantom. . . .

[Cries of "Vanna Vanna," arise from the crowd outside, at first as a murmur, and then growing louder and louder. The door, at back, opens, and VANNA, alone and pale, advances into the room, while men and women, who seem afraid to enter, try to hide themselves against the door. GUIDO sees her, and rushes towards her. He throws his arms round her and embraces her feverishly.]

GUIDO.

My Vanna! . . . What have they done, what have they said to you! . . . No, no, do not tell me. . . . I need only look into your eyes—there all is still pure and loyal, like a spring in which angels bathe. . . . Ah, those foolish men! They could harm nothing of what I loved; they have been like children throwing stones into the air, and imagining they could reach the blue! . . . As they gazed into your eyes their words will have shrivelled on their lips. . . . You had no need to answer—you will merely have looked at them. . . . And then, between them and you, between their thoughts and yours, a lake will have arisen, a limitless ocean of life and love. . . . But see, there is one here, a man whom I call father. . . . He sinks his head; his white hairs hide it. . . . We must forgive him; he is old and blinded. We must be merciful; we must make a great effort; your eyes say nothing to him—he is so far from us! . . . He has become a stranger; our love has passed over his sad old age like an April shower that falls upon flints. . . . Our

love is nothing to him; it has all escaped him. . . . He thinks that we love as they love who know not what the word means. . . . He cannot understand, he needs words. . . . Give him words; give him your answer!

VANNA.

(*Approaching MARCO.*) My father, I shall go to-night.

MARCO.

(*Kissing her brow.*) My daughter, I know. . . .

GUIDO.

What! What do you say?

VANNA.

Guido, I shall go. I must; I must obey. . . .

GUIDO.

Obey? obey whom? Tell me!

VANNA.

I shall go to Prinzivalle's tent to-night. . . .

GUIDO.

To die with him, to kill him? That had not occurred to me. Yes, yes, I can understand that!

VANNA.

Were I to kill him our city would not be saved. . . .

GUIDO.

What! You, you love him then! Since when do you love him?

VANNA.

I do not know him; I have never seen him. . . .

GUIDO.

But you have heard. Yes, yes, you have heard, people have told you. . . .

VANNA.

Nothing. Some one said just now that he was a very old man. . . .

GUIDO.

He is not! He is young, he is handsome, much younger than I. God! had he asked anything else I would have gone to him, crawled on my hands and knees, to save our city! Or wandered away with her and spent the rest of our life, unknown and forgotten, begging for alms at the cross-roads! . . . But this, this! Never in the history of the world has a conqueror dared— (*Going to VANNA and flinging his arms round her.*) Ah, Vanna, my Vanna, I cannot believe it! It is not your voice that I heard, but my father's, and his alone! No, I have heard nothing; all is as it was. . . . You shall tell me that I am mistaken, that your love, that all that was you, cried out, "No, no!" blushing at having to speak! . . . I tell you I have heard nothing, nothing; the silence has been unbroken. . . . But, see, now you must speak. . . . All are listening. . . . No one has heard. . . . All are waiting for the word that you must say. . . . Say it quickly, Vanna, that they may know you! Quickly! Declare our love, and dispel

this dream. . . . Speak the word I wait for, the word that must be spoken if all things are not to crumble in ruins around me! . . .

VANNA.

O Guido, I know how hard it must be to bear. . . .

GUIDO.

(Instinctively thrusting her from him.) How hard it must be! You know, you know? Have I not to bear it all, I who loved? You never have loved me! No, I begin to see! What am I to make of all this? . . . You are glad to leave me; you love this man, who knows! Ah, but here I still am the master, say what they will! . . . And you think I shall stand calmly by and let these things be? Beneath this room is a dungeon, a dark, cold dungeon, and there you shall stay while my Stradiotes keep watch, until such time as your heroism shall have cooled, and you learn where your duty lies. . . . Take her away! . . . I have spoken; it is my command! Go, and obey!

VANNA.

Guido, Guido, I need surely not tell you . . .

GUIDO.

They do not obey! No one here to do my bidding! You, Borso, Torello, have your arms turned to stone? Can my voice not make itself heard! . . . You, down there, you others, who stand and listen, can you not hear me? I shout to them: they do not move. . . . Take her away, I say! . . . Away, away! . . . Ah, I see what it is! They are afraid; they want to live—to live, that is all they care for! I must die that they may live; but not that way! . . . No, no, that were surely too easy. . . . Here am I alone against the crowd, and I am to pay for it all. . . . Why I, and not you! You all have wives! . . . (*Half drawing his sword and approaching VANNA.*) And what if I prefer death to dishonour? . . . That had not occurred to you! . . . But, see, I have only to raise my hand—



VANNA.

If your love bids you, Guido. . . .

GUIDO.

“If your love bids you”! Ah, yes, speak of love, you who never have known what it means! You, in whose soul there can never have been any love! Now as I look at you I see a desert—a desert where all is swallowed up, parched and dying . . . not even a tear, not a tear! . . . What was I, what was I to you? A man whose arms offered shelter, that was all! . . . Had you but for an instant . . .

VANNA.

Guido, look at me, look at me! Can you not see? What shall I say to you, Guido? Have I words to tell what I feel? Let me speak but one single word and all my strength goes! . . . I cannot. . . . I love you, I owe everything to you! . . . And yet I shall go, I must, I must. . . .

GUIDO.

(*Thrusting her from him.*) It is well! Go; get you hence! Go to him, I give you up. Go! You are mine no longer. . . .

VANNA.

(*Seizing his hand.*) Guido! . . .

GUIDO.

(*Pushing her away.*) Ah, do not clutch at me with those warm, soft hands. . . . My father was right; he knew you better. . . . Father, here she is. This is your work, finish it now to the end. . . . Lead her to this man's tent. I shall stay here and watch you go off together. . . . But do not imagine that I claim a share in the bread and meat she will buy. . . . There remains but one thing for me, and that you shall know very soon. . . .

VANNA.

(*Clinging to him.*) Guido, look at me; do not turn your eyes from me—that is too dreadful. . . . Let me see your eyes Guido. . . .

GUIDO.

See then! Look into my eyes, and read. . . . Go, I know you no longer! Time presses—out yonder he waits: night is falling. . . . Go! what have you to fear? I shall not kill myself. I am not mad; it is only when love is triumphant that reason totters, not when it falls into ruins. . . . I have gazed into the very depths of love, ay, of love and fidelity. . . . I have no more to say. No, no, unclasp your fingers; they cannot retain a vanishing love. All is over, finished, done with; there remains not a trace! . . . The past is engulfed, and the future too. . . . Ah, yes, those pure white fingers, those noble eyes, those lips; there was a time when I believed. . . . Now nothing remains. . . . (*Casting VANNA'S hands from him.*) Nothing, nothing, less than nothing! Farewell, Vanna! Get you gone. Farewell. . . . You go yonder? . . .

VANNA.

Yes. . . .

GUIDO.

You will not return? . . .

VANNA.

Yes, I shall return. . . .

GUIDO.

As to that, we shall see. . . . Ah, we shall see. . . . Who could have told me that my father knew her better than I! . . .

[He totters, and clings to one of the marble columns. VANNA goes out slowly and alone, without another glance at him.]

ACT II

PRINZIVALLE'S Tent

[*Sumptuous disorder. Hangings of silk and gold. Arms and precious furs are strewn about the place. Great chests lie half open, revealing quantities of jewels and glittering stuffs. The entrance to the tent is from the back, through a heavy curtain. PRINZIVALLE, standing by a table, is arranging documents, plans, and arms. Enter VEDIO.*

VEDIO.

Here is a letter from the Commissioner of the Republic.

PRINZIVALLE.

From Trivulzio?

VEDIO.

Yes. Messer Maladura, the second Commissioner, has not yet returned.

PRINZIVALLE.

The Venetian army, that threatens Florence from the Casentine, is probably offering unexpected resistance. Give me the letter. (*He takes it and reads.*) He sends me the formal command, under penalty of immediate arrest, and for the very last time, to deliver the assault at dawn. . . . It is well. The night, at least, is mine. . . . Immediate arrest. . . . Ah, how little they know! . . . Do they really imagine that stale, hackneyed words like these can bring terror to the man who awaits the unique hour of his life! . . . Threats, arrest, calumny, trial, judgment—what is all this to me? . . . They would have arrested me long ago, had they been able, had they dared. . . .

VEDIO.

Messer Trivulzio told me, as he gave me the letter, that he would follow. He desires to speak with you. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Ah, so he has made up his mind at last. . . . Our interview will decide many things; and

this wizened little scribe, who stands here for all the occult power of Florence, and yet dare not raise his eyes to mine; this wretched, pale-faced dwarf who hates me more than death, shall spend an hour he has not looked for. . . . Grave orders must have reached him that he ventures to beard the monster in his den. . . . What guards are at my door?

VEDIO.

Two old soldiers of your Galician band. I thought I recognised Hernando, and the other, I believe, is Diego.

PRINZIVALLE.

Good; they would obey me, those two, did I tell them to put all the saints of heaven in chains. . . . It is growing dark, have the lamp lit. What is the time?

VEDIO.

It is past nine.

PRINZIVALLE.

Marco Colonna has not returned?

VEDIO.

The sentries at the moat will bring him to you the moment he arrives.

PRINZIVALLE.

He had been here ere this were my offer rejected. . . . This hour decides; and it holds all my life, like the great ships with flowing sails of which prisoners dream, as they stare into the darkness around them. . . . It is strange that a man should thus confide all his destiny, his brain, his soul, his joy, and his sorrow, to a thing so frail as the love of a woman! . . . I could smile at it myself, were it not stronger than my smile. . . . Marco does not return. . . . She will come, therefore. . . . Go, look for the beacon which declares her consent. . . . See whether the light be there that heralds the trembling footsteps of the woman who gives herself that the others may live, and saves me at the same time as she saves her people. . . . No, stay—I will go myself. I have waited since my boyhood for this hour, waited and yearned; and no eyes but mine: not even those

of a friend, must be the first to greet its coming. . . . (*He goes to the entrance of the tent, flings back the curtain and looks into the night.*) See, the light, Vedio, the light! See how it shines and flares into the blackness! . . . From the Campanile—that is well, that is as it should be. . . . See how it pierces the gloom! . . . It is the only light that shines on the town. . . . Ah, never yet has Pisa lifted to the skies so glorious a flower, waited for so long and with so little hope! . . . Ah, my brave Pisans! You will hold festival to-night that shall linger long in your annals; while I shall know a diviner joy than had I saved my native city. . . .

VEDIO.

(*Touching his arm.*) Let us return to the tent. Messer Trivulzio comes from yonder.

PRINZIVALLE.

(*Coming back and dropping the curtain.*) That is so. We must still . . . The interview will be brief. . . . (*He goes to the table and fingers the papers there.*) Have you his three letters?

VEDIO.

There are only two.

PRINZIVALLE.

The two that I intercepted, and this evening's order. . . .

VEDIO.

Here are the first two. You are crumpling the other in your hand. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

He is coming. . . .

[The guard raises the curtain. Enter

TRIVULZIO.

TRIVULZIO.

Have you observed the strange light that appears to be flashing signals from the Campanile? . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

You think they are signals?

TRIVULZIO.

I have no doubt of it. . . . I must speak with you, Prinzivalle.

PRINZIVALLE.

Say on. Leave us, Vedio, but do not go far away; I shall want you. [VEDIO goes.

TRIVULZIO.

You are aware, Prinzivalle, of the high esteem in which I hold you. This, indeed, I have already proved to you more than once, but there is much besides of which you are ignorant; for the policy of Florence, which people term perfidious, though it be merely prudent, demands that many things should be concealed even from those whom she admits to her most intimate secrets. We all obey her profound orders; and each one of us must courageously support the weight of her mysteries, which are the emanation of her supreme intelligence. Let it suffice, then, that I tell you that I had a very good share in your election, notwithstanding your youth and unknown origin, to the

command of the most magnificent army the Republic has ever put into the field; nor, indeed, has there ever been cause to regret this choice. But for some time now a party has been forming against you. I am not sure whether, in revealing this to you, I am not allowing the sincere friendship in which I hold you to infringe somewhat upon my duty. There are often occasions, however, when a too narrow clinging to duty may work more mischief than the very rashest generosity. Know, therefore, that you have enemies who accuse you most bitterly of indecision, vacillation, sloth. Others even go so far as to throw doubt upon your loyalty. Carefully framed slanders have been set on foot, which lend colour to these insinuations. They have produced a disastrous effect upon that section of the Assembly that already eyed you with disfavour. These have gone so far as to discuss your arrest, and your trial. Fortunately, I was advised in time. I hastened to Florence, and had no difficulty in opposing proof to proof. I stood surety for you. It remains for you now to justify my confidence, which has never

for an instant wavered ; for we are lost if you do not act. My colleague, Messer Maladura, is held in check at Bibbiena by the troops of the Venetian Proveditor. Another army is marching upon Florence from the North. The city is in danger. All may yet be well if on the morrow you deliver the assault for which we have waited so long. This will set free our finest army, as well as the only captain whom victory has never forsaken ; and we shall be able to return proudly to Florence, amidst the pomp and triumph that shall turn your enemies of yesterday into your most fervent admirers and partisans. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Is that all you have to say to me ?

TRIVULZIO.

Very nearly ; though I have passed over in silence the very real affection in which I hold you, which has indeed grown with every day of our intercourse. And this, notwithstanding the difficult position in which we are often placed by laws that seem contradictory ; laws

which demand that the authority of the general should at times—at moments of danger—be balanced by the mysterious power of Florence, whereof I am this day the humble representative. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

This order that I have just received was written by you ?

TRIVULZIO.

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE.

By your own hand ?

TRIVULZIO.

Undoubtedly. Why this question ?

PRINZIVALLE.

These two letters—you recognise them ?

TRIVULZIO.

Perhaps. I know not; what do they contain ? . . . I must first . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

There is no need. I know.

TRIVULZIO.

Are they the two letters you intercepted, as I hoped you might? . . . I see that the test was good.

PRINZIVALLE.

You are not dealing with a child. Let us not fall back on such wretched tricks as these; or prolong an interview that I am eager to end, that, indeed, delays a reward which no triumph in Florence could ever equal! . . . In these letters you have most basely and falsely denounced every action of mine. Was this from pure malice, or to provide the treacherous avarice of Florence with the indispensable excuse for dealing cheaply with a victorious mercenary? . . . In these letters all things are distorted with so fiendish a skill, that there are moments when I doubt my own innocence. My every action has been disfigured, degraded, besmirched; and this

from the very first week of the siege, down to the hour when my eyes were opened—the fortunate hour when I resolved to justify your suspicions. I have had your letters carefully copied—I have sent them to Florence. I intercepted the answers. Your word is accepted, you are believed: the more readily inasmuch as you had been supplied with the theme of your accusation. I am judged, unheard; I am condemned to death. . . . And I know full well that not all the innocence of the archangels could help me to escape from the damning proofs that you have provided. . . . And therefore do I now spring forward, burst your puny chains, and take the initiative. Hitherto, I have been no traitor; but since these two letters fell into my hands I have been preparing your ruin. This night I shall sell you, you and your sorry masters; I shall deal you the cruellest, the most fatal blow that lies in my power. And I shall regard it as the noblest deed of all my life, thus to have humbled the one city that exalts treachery to a virtue, and seeks to govern the universe by means of fraud and hypocrisy, lies,

ingratitude, and villainy. . . . For this evening, thanks to me, Pisa, your ancient enemy, who prevents you, and shall prevent you whilst her walls stand, from spreading corruption over all the world; this evening Pisa shall be saved, and shall lift her head to breathe defiance once more. . . . Ah, do not rise, or make vain gestures. . . . My measures have all been taken, and they are inevitable; you are in my power; and even as I hold you now do I seem to hold in my hand the destiny of Florence. . . .

[TRIVULZIO *draws his dagger and aims a swift blow at PRINZIVALLE.*

TRIVULZIO.

Not yet. . . . Not while my hands are free . . .

[PRINZIVALLE, *warding off the blow with his arm, has thrown up the weapon, which strikes him in the face. He seizes TRIVULZIO by the wrist.*

PRINZIVALLE.

I was not prepared for this spasm of terror. . . . See, I hold you now, and can crush you with one hand. . . . I have only to lower

this dagger. . . . It would seem already to be seeking your throat. What, you say nothing; are you not afraid then?

TRIVULZIO.

(*Coldly.*) No; use the dagger, it is your right. I knew my life was forfeit.

PRINZIVALLE.

(*Loosening his hold.*) Ah. . . . But, truly, then, this thing is strange that you have done. . . . And even very rare. . . . There are not many soldiers who would so readily clutch the hand of death; and I should not have thought that within so feeble a body . . .

TRIVULZIO.

You men of the sword are only too apt to believe that there is no other courage than that which dwells at the end of a blade. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

You may be right. . . . It is well. . . . You are not free, but no harm shall be done

you. . . . We serve different gods, you and I. (*He wipes the blood from his face.*) Ah, the blow was not unskilful. . . . A little too hasty, but not lacking in vigour. . . . It went within an ace of . . . And now, tell me, what would you do, if you held a man in your hands who had been so nigh despatching you to a world whither no one is anxious to go ?

TRIVULZIO.

I should not spare him.

PRINZIVALLE.

I do not understand you. . . . You are strange. . . . Confess that it was a despicable thing to write those letters. I have shed my blood for Florence in three great battles; I have never spared myself, I have strained every nerve, the gain was all yours. I was a faithful servant to the Republic, nor did one single thought of disloyalty ever enter my heart. . . . You must have known this, you who were always spying upon me. . . . And yet, in your letters, some vile malice or

hatred caused you to distort every action of mine, every step that I took. I thought only of Florence; you heaped slander on slander, and lie upon lie. . . .

TRIVULZIO.

The facts were fallacious—that mattered but little. It was for me to guard against the dangerous hour when the soldier, flushed by two or three victories, is on the point of no longer obeying the master he serves, whose mission is loftier than his. That hour had sounded, as this hour proves. The people of Florence held you too fondly. It is for us to shatter their idols. They show some resentment at the time, but they have created us that we may oppose their dangerous caprices; and it seemed to me that the hour had come to mark out their idol for destruction. I warned Florence. She knew what my falsehoods meant. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

The hour had not come, and would never have come, but for your shameful letters. . . .

TRIVULZIO.

It might have come, and that was sufficient. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

What! Is an innocent man to be sacrificed to a mere possibility? Offered up in cold blood to a danger that never might threaten?

TRIVULZIO.

What is the life of one man to the safety of Florence!

PRINZIVALLE.

You believe, then, in the destiny of Florence, in her work, her existence? She must be something, then, that I do not understand? . . .

TRIVULZIO.

Yes, I believe only in her; the rest is nothing to me. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

After all it may be so. . . . And you are right, since you believe. . . . I have no

country, I cannot tell. There are times when I regret that I have no country. . . . But I have something that you never shall have; that no man ever has had as much as I. . . . That atones for all. . . . Go; let us part, we have no time to weigh these enigmas. . . . We are far removed from each other, and yet there are points where we almost touch. . . . Each man has his destiny. . . . Some follow an idea, and others a desire; and it would be as hard for you to change your idea as for me to change my desire. . . . Fare you well, Trivulzio; we go different ways. . . . Give me your hand.

TRIVULZIO.

Not yet. I shall give you my hand on the day of punishment. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Be it so; to-day you have lost, you will win to-morrow. . . . (*He calls "VEDIO!"*)

[VEDIO *comes in.*

E

VEDIO.

Master! . . . What, you are wounded, the blood is flowing. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

No matter. . . . Summon the two guards. Let them take this man away; but see that they do him no injury. . . . He is an enemy whom I love. . . . Let them bestow him in some safe place, where no one shall see him. . . . They answer for his safety, and shall set him free at my command. . . .

[VEDIO goes, leading TRIVULZIO. PRINZIVALLE stands before a mirror and examines his wound.]

PRINZIVALLE.

The wound is not deep, but it has bitten into my face. . . . Who could have thought that so feeble and haggard a man . . . (VEDIO returns.) You have done as I bid you?

VEDIO.

Yes. Master, this will mean ruin. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Ruin! . . . Ah, that I could be ruined thus each day to the day of my death! . . . Ruin, Vedio! . . . Why, never yet in this world will a legitimate revenge have brought to a man a happiness like mine—a happiness of which he has dreamed ever since he first learnt to dream. . . . I have waited and prayed for it! I would have allowed no crime to stop me, for it was mine, it belonged to me, and I was bound to have it; and now that my star, urged on by justice, by pity, sends it to me, upon its silvery rays, you speak of ruin! . . . Oh, poor men with cold hearts! . . . Poor men without love! . . . Do you not know, then, that at this moment my destiny is being weighed in the sky, and that they are awarding me the share of a hundred lovers, the share of a thousand joys! . . . Ah, I know it! . . . I touch the moment when those marked out for grand disaster or triumph suddenly find themselves on the topmost peak of their life, where all things belong to them and obey them, and

become moulded to their hand! . . . And what matters the rest, and all that comes after! . . . There is an ecstasy too great for man, and it crushes him who achieves it! . . .

VEDIO.

(*Approaching him with a linen bandage.*)
The blood still flows; let me tie up your face.

PRINZIVALLE.

Yes. Since it must be. . . . But see that your bandages do not cover my eyes. (*Looking into the mirror.*) Ah, I seem more like a patient shrinking from a surgeon's knife than a lover who soon will be joyfully welcoming his love! . . . (*He shifts the bandage.*) And you, Vedio, my poor Vedio, what will become of you?

VEDIO.

Master, where you go I go too. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Nay, you must leave me. . . . I know not whither I shall go, or what will become of me. . . . Do you make good your escape; none

will follow you, whereas if you go with your master . . . In these coffers is gold ; take it, it is yours, I need it no longer. . . . Are the waggons ready, the flocks all gathered ?

VEDIO.

They are in front of the tent.

PRINZIVALLE.

Good. When I give the signal you will do what has to be done. (*The sound of a gun-shot is heard from afar.*) What is that ?

VEDIO.

A shot has been fired at the outposts.

PRINZIVALLE.

Who gave the order ? . . . It must be a mistake. . . . If they should have fired at her ! Did you not tell . . .

VEDIO.

Yes. It is impossible. I placed a number of guards there, who will bring her to you the moment that she arrives.

PRINZIVALLE.

Go and see.

[*Exit VEDIO.*

[*For a moment PRINZIVALLE remains alone. VEDIO returns, raises the curtain at the entrance, and murmurs "Master." Then he withdraws and MONNA VANNA, wrapt in a long mantle, appears, and pauses on the threshold. PRINZIVALLE trembles, and moves toward her.*

VANNA.

(*In a stifled voice.*) I have come as you bade me. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

There is blood on your hand: are you wounded? . . .

VANNA.

A ball touched my shoulder. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

What? When? . . . This is terrible—

VANNA.

As I drew near the camp.

PRINZIVALLE.

Who fired the shot? . . .

VANNA.

I know not, the man fled.

PRINZIVALLE.

Are you in pain? . . .

VANNA.

No.

PRINZIVALLE.

Shall I have the wound dressed?

VANNA.

No. It is nothing. [*A moment's silence.*]

PRINZIVALLE.

Your mind is made up? . . .

VANNA.

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE.

Shall I remind you of the conditions ?

VANNA.

There is no need.

PRINZIVALLE.

You have no regrets ? . . .

VANNA.

Was it stipulated that I should come without regrets ?

PRINZIVALLE.

Your husband consents ? . . .

VANNA.

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE.

There still is time if you wish to renounce. . . .

VANNA.

No.

PRINZIVALLE.

But why are you doing this ?

VANNA.

Because out yonder they perish of hunger, and to-morrow a still swifter death would await them. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

There is no other reason ?

VANNA.

What other could there be ? . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

I can conceive that a virtuous woman . . .

VANNA.

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE.

One who loves her husband . . .

VANNA.

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE.

Deeply ?

VANNA.

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE.

You are clad only in your mantle ?

VANNA.

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE.

You have seen the chariots and flocks in
front of the tent ?

VANNA.

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE.

There are two hundred waggons filled with the best Tuscan wheat; two hundred others laden with forage, and with fruit and wine from Sienna. There are thirty more filled with German powder, and fifteen smaller ones laden with lead; and around them are six hundred oxen from Apulia, and twelve hundred sheep. They await your order to march into Pisa. Would you care to see them start?

VANNA.

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE.

Come then to the door of my tent.

[He raises the tapestry, gives the order, and makes a signal. A sound is heard as of a vague and mighty movement. Torches are kindled, and waved to and fro. Whips are cracked and waggons creak. There is the bleating of sheep and the lowing of oxen. VANNA and PRINZIVALLE, erect on the threshold of the tent, watch for a

moment the enormous convoy as it starts forth, with torches flaming in the starry night.

PRINZIVALLE.

From this night, thanks to you, Pisa will cease to be hungry. She is invincible now, and to-morrow will know the glory of a joy and triumph for which none had dared any longer to hope. . . . Are you satisfied?

VANNA.

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE.

Let us close the tent then; and give me your hand. The evening is still mild, but the night will be cold. You have no weapons concealed about you, no poison?

VANNA.

I have only my sandals and this mantle. Search me if you are afraid. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

It is not for myself that I fear, but for you. . . .

VANNA.

I place the life of my people high above all. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

It is well, and you have done right. . . . Come, sit here. . . . It is a warrior's couch, rugged and fierce, narrow as a tomb, and but little worthy of you. . . . Lie here, on these tiger-skins, that have never yet felt the gentle touch of a woman. . . . Place this soft fur at your feet. . . . It is the skin of a lynx that an African monarch gave me on the night of a victory. . . .

[VANNA *sits, closely wrapped in her mantle.*

PRINZIVALLE.

The light of the lamp is falling on your eyes; shall I move it?

VANNA.

It matters not. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

(*Kneeling at the foot of the couch and seizing VANNA'S hand.*) Giovanna! . . . (*VANNA starts up in surprise and looks at him.*) Oh, Vanna, my Vanna . . .—for I, too, used to call you thus. . . . Now I tremble as I speak your name. . . . It has so long remained trebly sealed in my heart that it cannot escape without breaking its prison. . . . Indeed, it is my heart, it is all I have. . . . In each one of its syllables lies all my life, and as I pronounce them I feel my life flow from me. . . . It was familiar to me, I thought I knew it; I had said it again and again to myself, until I ceased to be afraid: I had spoken it every hour of every day, like a great word of love that one yearns to utter, if it be only once, in the presence of her whom it has so long evoked in vain. . . . I thought that my lips had shaped themselves to its form; that at the long-sought-for moment they would pronounce it, so softly, so meekly, so humbly, with so profound and mighty a yearning, that she who should hear it would know the distress and the love that it held. . . .

Whereas, to-day it is merely a shadow. . . . It is no longer the same. . . . My fears and sorrows have bruised it and crushed it, and I can scarcely recognise it as it leaves my lips. All the meaning and adoration that I have placed within it come now to break my strength and extinguish my voice. . . .

VANNA.

Who are you?

PRINZIVALLE.

You do not know me? . . . I recall no memory? . . . Ah, the marvels that time effaces! . . . But it is true that I alone had seen those marvels. . . . And it is better, perhaps, that they should be forgotten. . . . I shall hope no longer, I shall have fewer regrets! . . . No, I am nothing to you. . . . A poor wretch, who for one single instant wistfully gazes at what has been the aim of his life; an unhappy man who asks nothing, who knows not even what it is he should ask; and yet he would, were it possible to him, tell you before you go of what you have been to him, and will be to the very end of his life. . . .

VANNA.

You know me then? . . . Who are you? . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

You do not remember the man who is looking at you now, as, in a fairy world, one would look at the very source of one's joy and existence? . . .

VANNA.

No. . . . At least I do not believe . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Yes, you have forgotten. . . . And I was sure, alas, that you had forgotten! . . . You were eight years old and I twelve when I met you for the first time. . . .

VANNA.

Where? . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

At Venice, one Sunday in June. . . . My father, the old goldsmith, brought your mother

a necklace of pearls. She was admiring the necklace—I strayed into the garden. . . . I found you there, by the side of a pond, in a grove of myrtle. . . . A slender golden ring had fallen into the water. . . . You were crying on the bank. . . . I sprang into the pond. . . . The ring was glittering on the marble basin; I seized it and placed it on your finger. . . . I was nearly drowned. . . . But you kissed me and were happy. . . .

VANNA.

It was a fair-haired child named Gianello. Are you Gianello?

PRINZIVALLE.

Yes.

VANNA.

Who could have recognised you? . . . And, besides, your face is covered with bandages. . . . I can only see your eyes. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

(*Shifting the bandages.*) Do you know me now that I move them?

VANNA.

Yes, perhaps. . . . I seem to. . . . For your smile is still that of a child. . . . But you are wounded, the blood is flowing. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Ah, it is not my first wound. . . . But that any one should have hurt you. . . .

VANNA.

Let me adjust your bandage, it is badly tied. (*She winds the linen round his cheek.*) I have often tended the wounded in this war. . . . Yes, yes, I remember. . . . I can see the garden again, with its pomegranates, its roses and laurels. We played there more than once, in the afternoon, when the sun shone hot on the sand. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Twelve times in all—I kept count. . . . I can tell you each game that we played, and every word that you said. . . .

VANNA.

Then, one day, I remember, I waited—for I loved you well, you were so solemn, so quiet, and treated me like a little queen. . . . But you never came back. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

My father took me to Africa. . . . There we got lost in the desert. . . . Then I was taken prisoner by the Arabs, the Turks, the Spaniards—that was my life. When I saw Venice again your mother was dead; the garden lay waste. . . . I sought you in vain. . . . Till, at last, I heard of you, thanks to your beauty, which no man could ever forget who once had beheld it. . . .

VANNA.

You knew me at once when I came in ?

PRINZIVALLE.

Had ten thousand women come into my tent, every one with a face like yours and clad alike and equally beautiful, ten thousand

sisters whom their own kindred could not distinguish, I should have risen and taken you by the hand and said, "This is she." . . . It is strange, is it not, that an image one loves should thus be able to dwell in the heart; for in this heart of mine yours lived so profoundly that it grew and it changed. . . . It was different to-day from what it was yesterday, it blossomed, it became more beautiful; and the years adorned it with the gifts that they bring to the budding child. . . . And yet, when I saw you again it seemed at first as though my eyes deceived me. . . . My memory, that had so faithfully treasured your beauty, had yet been too timid, too halting; it had not dared to invest you with all the glory which so suddenly flashed on my sight. I was like the man who remembers a flower he has only seen once as he crosses the garden in twilight, and suddenly beholds a hundred thousand beneath the radiant light of the sun. . . . You came in, and I saw the brow again that I knew so well, the hair, and the eyes; I saw the soul in the face I adored. . . . But its beauty dwarfed the one that I had been

silently storing for days and days, and months without end, and year after year—the beauty that had fed on a halting memory, and fallen so immeasurably short of the real. . . .

VANNA.

Yes, you loved me as one loves at that age; but time and absence throw a glamour over love. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Men often say they have only loved once in their life, but it rarely is true. . . . To disguise their indifference, or their desire, they lay claim to the wonderful sorrow of those who were born for a single love; and when one of these tries to tell of the deep and the dolorous truth that has furrowed his life, the words that the fortunate lovers have used so freely have lost all their strength, all their gravity: and she who listens will unconsciously degrade the poor sacred words, often so full of sadness, to the trivial, playful meaning they have for the majority of men. . . .

VANNA.

I shall not do that. I can understand the love for which we all yearn when our life begins; the love we renounce because years—although mine are few—put an end to many things. . . . But, tell me, when you passed through Venice again and had found trace of me—tell me what happened then? You made no effort to see the woman whom you had loved so deeply? . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

At Venice I learned that your mother was dead, that her fortune was lost, and that you were about to marry a great Tuscan noble, the richest and most powerful of all in Pisa, to whom you would be as a queen, adored and happy. . . . I was an adventurer without a home, without a country—what was there that I could offer? . . . Destiny seemed to demand the sacrifice I grudgingly made to my love. Ah, how often have I wandered around the walls of this city, and clung to the chains

of the gate, in my fear lest my longing to see you should overwhelm me, and disturb the love and the happiness that you had found. . . . I hired out my sword, I engaged in two or three wars; I was a mercenary, and my name became known. . . . I waited for the days to come, though hope had left me; till at last Florence despatched me to Pisa. . . .

VANNA.

How feeble and cowardly men become when they love! . . . Understand me well; I do not love you, nor can I tell whether I could ever have loved you. . . . But it makes the very soul of love leap and cry in my heart when I find that a man who pretended to love as I might myself have loved, had not more courage in the face of love. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

It was not courage that failed me. . . . I had need of more than you think to be able to go. . . . But it was too late. . . .

VANNA.

It was not too late when you left Venice. When one finds a love that fills a life it never can be too late. . . . Such a love never renounces. Expecting nothing, it hopes. And it struggles, still, when it has ceased to hope. Had I loved as you say you loved, then I would have . . . Ah, one cannot say what one would have done. . . . But this much I know, fate should not have wrenched my happiness from me without a struggle. . . . I should have cried to fate, "Hence, hence, I pass here!" . . . I should have forced the very stones to side with me! And whatever the cost, the man whom I loved should have learnt of my love, and himself have pronounced the sentence, and pronounced it more than once! . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

(*Seeking her hand.*) You do not love him, Vanna?

VANNA.

Whom?

PRINZIVALLE.

Guido.

VANNA.

(*Withdrawing her hand.*) Do not take my hand. I cannot give it to you. I see I must make myself clear. When Guido married me I was alone, almost poor; and the woman who is alone and poor, soon falls victim to calumny, especially if her face be fair, and she scornful of artifice or falsehood. . . . To these calumnies Guido paid no heed; he had faith in me, and his faith pleased me. He made me happy; at least as happy as one can be when one has renounced the vague and extravagant dreams which seem beyond human life; and I almost hope to convince you too, that one can be happy without spending one's days in search of a happiness that no man ever has known. I love Guido to-day with a love less strange than the one you imagine you feel; but mine, at least, is steadier, calmer, more faithful, and more sure. . . . That is the love that fortune has given me; I accepted it with my eyes open;

I shall have no other; and if any one breaks it that one will not be I. . . . So you see you have misunderstood me. . . . When I tried to point out to you what I thought was an error of yours, it was not of you that I spoke, it was not of us: I spoke in the name of a love of which a glimpse descends on the heart at the very first dawn: a love which exists, perhaps, but that is not mine or yours; for you have not done what such a love would do. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

You judge me harshly, Vanna, or rather this love of mine. You judge it with all too little knowledge of what it has done, and had to suffer, in order to bring about this one happy moment that would most surely plunge every other love into despair. . . . But though it had done nothing, and attempted nothing, I know of its existence, I who am its victim, whose life it has seized: I who bear it within me, and have lost all that makes for the joy and glory of man! . . . Ah, believe me, Vanna, and you must believe me, for I am of those who ask for nothing and hope for nothing! . . . You are

in my tent now, and at my mercy. . . . I have only to say a word, to stretch out my hand, and all is mine that the ordinary lover demands. . . . But you know as well as I that the love of which I have spoken craves other things; therefore I ask that you no longer doubt me. . . . I took your hand because I thought you would believe me. . . . I shall not touch it again, my lips shall not press it; but, at least, Vanna, when we shall part to meet no more, at least know what kind of love mine has been, that it halted only before the impossible!

VANNA.

From the moment that it could regard anything as impossible, is not doubt permitted? I demand no superhuman ordeals, no terrible obstacles to be overcome. I ask for no proofs of this kind, I am only too willing to believe. . . . Indeed, it is for the sake of your happiness, and mine, that I still would try to doubt. . . . In a love as mighty as yours there is something sacred, that could not but disturb the coldest of women. . . . And therefore do I probe into what you have done, and should be almost

happy could I discover nothing that bears the stamp of this mortal passion, on which fate so seldom smiles. . . . And I should have been convinced that I had found nothing, but for this last act of yours; for when I remember that you have madly wrecked your future, your fame, all that you have in the world, to bring me here for an hour beneath this tent, then am I forced to admit that possibly your love may be what you say. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

This last act is the only one that proves nothing. . . .

VANNA.

How? . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

I prefer you should know the truth. In causing you to come to me here, in saving Pisa in your name, I have sacrificed nothing.

VANNA.

I do not understand. . . . Have you not betrayed your country, effaced your past services,

ruined your future? What stands before you?
Is it not exile or death?

PRINZIVALLE.

In the first place I have no country. Otherwise, had my love been never so great, I should not have betrayed it for that love. . . . But I am only a mercenary, faithful when others are faithful, a traitor when they betray. . . . I have been falsely accused by the Florentine Commissioners, and condemned without trial by a Republic of merchants, whose ways you know as well as I. I was aware that I was lost; and the thing I have done to-night, far from hastening my ruin, will perhaps save me, if that still be possible. . . .

VANNA.

So what you have sacrificed for my sake counts but little?

PRINZIVALLE.

It counts nothing at all. . . . I could not but tell you. I should have no joy in a smile of yours that I had purchased with a lie. . . .

VANNA.

Ah, Gianello, Gianello, this is worth more than love and its noblest proofs! . . . You need no longer seek the hand that fled from you before. Take it. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

I had rather that love had won it! . . . But what matter, after all! . . . It belongs to me, Vanna: I hold it between mine, I drink its fragrance, I live its life, it is one with me—I lose myself for a moment in the sweet illusion. . . . Ah, the dear hand! I open it, close it, as though it could answer me in the secret, mysterious language of lovers; I press my kisses upon it, and you still let it lie here. . . . You forgive me, then, the cruel ordeal to which I exposed you? . . .

VANNA.

I should have done the same thing; better perhaps or worse, had I been in your place. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Did you know who I was when you agreed to come to my tent? . . .

VANNA.

No one knew. There were strange rumours. . . . According to some, Prinzivalle was a horrible old man; others declared him a young prince of marvellous beauty. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

But Guido's father saw me; did he say nothing? . . .

VANNA.

No.

PRINZIVALLE.

You did not question him? . . .

VANNA.

No.

PRINZIVALLE.

But did your heart not fail you when you came in the night, helpless, to the tent of an unknown savage? . . .

VANNA.

The sacrifice had to be made. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

And when you saw me?

VANNA.

At first the bandages hid your face. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Yes, but afterwards, Vanna, when I raised them?

VANNA.

Then it was different, and I already knew you. . . . But you, when you saw me enter the tent—what was in your mind then; what had you intended to do? . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Ah, how can I tell! . . . I knew I was lost, I had the wild craving to drag all things down with me. . . . And I hated you because of this love of mine! I marvel now at myself when I

think of it. . . . There needed but a word that was not yours, a gesture different from your gestures, to unchain the brute within me and fan my hatred. . . . But the moment I saw you I realised how impossible it was. . . .

VANNA.

So did I realise it too, and all fear left me, for we understood each other without a word being said. And it is all very strange. . . . I should have done this thing, too, I believe, had I loved like you. . . . Indeed, there are moments, as I listen to you, when I fancy that I am speaking, and that your words are my words, and you hearing what I am saying. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

I, too, Vanna, I felt at once that the wall which divides us from all other beings was growing transparent; it was as though I had plunged my hands into a flowing stream, and withdrawn them sparkling with light, shining with confidence and sincerity. . . . And it seemed to me that men were changed, that all I had hitherto thought had been

wrong. . . . Most of all did I feel that I myself was changed, emerging at last as from a long imprisonment; that the gates were opening, flowers and leaves entwining around the bars; that the snows were melting on the far horizon, and the pure air of the morning entering my soul and breathing upon my love! . . .

VANNA.

In me, too, there was a change. I was surprised to find myself speaking to you as I did from the very beginning. . . . I am habitually silent. . . . I have never spoken thus to any man, save it be to Marco, Guido's father, and even with him it is different. . . . He is wrapt in a thousand dreams; our conversations are rare . . . and, as for the others, there is always a look in their eyes that chills me. How dare I tell them I love them, or that I yearn to know what is passing in their heart? . . . Your eyes do not repel, they do not alarm. . . . I felt at once that I knew you, though I could not recall where it was I had seen you before. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Could you have loved me, Vanna, had my evil star not brought me to you when it was too late? . . .

VANNA.

Were I to tell you that I could have loved you, it would be the same as my telling you that I love you now, Gianello, and you know as well as I that cannot be. . . . But we speak to each other here as though we were on a desert island. . . . Were I alone in the world there would be no more to say. . . . But we forget the suffering that another endures, while we two smile at the past. . . . When I think of Guido's sorrow as I left Pisa, the despair in his eyes, his haggard face—oh, I can wait no longer! . . . Dawn must be close at hand, and I am so eager to know! . . . I hear a footstep, some one is passing the tent. . . . People are whispering behind the curtain. . . . Listen, listen! . . . What is it?

[The sound of whispers and hurried footsteps is heard outside the tent. Then the voice of VEDIO from without.]

VEDIO.

(*Off.*) Master!

PRINZIVALLE.

It is Vedio. Come in! Well?

VEDIO.

(*At the entrance of the tent.*) Quick, quick! Master, you must fly! Lose not an instant! Messer Maladura, the second Commissioner of Florence . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

He was at Bibbiena. . . .

VEDIO.

He has returned. . . . Six hundred Florentines are with him. . . . I saw them pass. The camp is in uproar. . . . He brings orders. . . . He proclaims you traitor. . . . He now seeks Trivulzio, and if he should find him while you are still here . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Come, Vanna. . . .

VANNA.

Whither shall I go ?

PRINZIVALLE.

Vedio, with two men on whom I can rely, shall escort you to Pisa. . . .

VANNA.

And you, what will you do ?

PRINZIVALLE.

I know not, and it matters little. The world is wide enough—I shall find shelter.

VEDIO.

Oh, master, beware ! They hold the country all round the town, and Tuscany is full of spies. . . .

VANNA.

Come to Pisa.

PRINZIVALLE.

With you ? . . .

VANNA.

Yes.

PRINZIVALLE.

I cannot. . . .

VANNA.

If only for a few days . . . to put them off
the scent. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

What will your husband do? . . .

VANNA.

He will not fail in his duty to a guest. . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Will he believe you when you tell him? . . .

VANNA.

Yes. . .—If he did not believe me . . .
But he will, he must. . .—Come. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

No.

VANNA.

Why?—What do you fear?

PRINZIVALLE.

It is for you that I fear. . . .

VANNA.

For me? For me the danger is the same whether I be alone or with you. It is for you we must fear, for you who have saved Pisa; now it is right that Pisa should save you. . . . You come under my protection, and I stand surety for you. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

So be it: I will go with you. . . .

VANNA.

You could give me no better proof of your love. . . . Come. Let us lose no time. . . . Throw open the tent. . . .

[PRINZIVALLE, *followed by VANNA, moves to the entrance and throws the tapestry wide open. There is a vast murmur*

of voices and clashing of arms; but above all is heard the sound of distant bells, pealing joyfully, that burst sharply upon the silence of the night. Far away in the distance Pisa is seen on the horizon, brilliantly illuminated. Great bonfires throw a mighty glare on the dark sky.

PRINZIVALLE.

Look, Vanna, look!

VANNA.

What is it, Gianello? . . . Oh, I understand! . . . These are the fires of joy that they have kindled, to celebrate what you have done. . . . The walls are aglow, the ramparts glitter, the Campanile shines like a torch of gladness. See how the radiant towers are whispering to the stars! . . . And the very streets are reflected in the sky: I can recognise the road I trod this evening! . . . There is the piazza with its dome of fire; and the Campo Santo, that makes an island of shadows!

. . . One could almost imagine that life, but now at its very last gasp, had rushed back to Pisa, leaping from spire to spire, flinging itself across the skies, flooding the walls, the whole country, and now making signals to us, and calling us back. . . . Listen, listen! . . . Hark to the shouts, the ecstasy, the delirium, rising and swelling, as though the sea were invading Pisa! . . . Hark to the bells, the bells that sound as they did at my wedding. . . . Ah, I am happy, happy, and happiest of all to owe my happiness to you, to you who have loved me best! . . . Come, my Gianello! (*She kisses him on the brow.*) That is the only kiss I can give you. . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

Oh, my Giovanna, it is the most exquisite kiss that love could hope for! . . . But see, you tremble; your knees bend under you! . . . Come, lean on me, put your arm round me. . . .

VANNA.

It is nothing: I am faint—I have overtaxed my strength. Help me, carry me!

Let nothing hinder my first happy steps.
. . . How beautiful is the night beneath the
wakening dawn! . . . Quick! Let us hasten,
it is time. We must arrive before the joy has
faded. . . .

[*They go out together, PRINZIVALLE sup-
porting VANNA.*

ACT III

State Apartment of GUIDO COLONNA.

[Lofty windows, porticos, marble columns, &c. To the left, at back, a terrace, the approach to which is by a great double staircase. On the balustrade of the terrace are huge vases filled with flowers. In the centre of the room, between the columns, ample marble steps lead to the terrace, which commands a view over a great part of the town. Enter MARCO, GUIDO, BORSO, and TORELLO.]

GUIDO.

I yielded to you, to her, to every one; but now it is only just that I should have my turn. I have been silent, I have held my breath, I have hidden—as a coward might hide while thieves are plundering his house. . . . But, in

my degradation, I have still retained my honour. . . . You have made a tradesman of me, a huckster, a weaver of cunning bargains. . . . But now the dawn has come. . . . I have not budged from my place. . . . A contract was made, I had to respect it. I had to purchase your food. . . . This night, this noble night, belonged to the buyer. . . . Ah, who knows, it was not too high a price, perhaps, to pay for this wheat, for all these sheep and oxen. . . . Now you have eaten your fill, and I have paid. . . . Now I am free, I am master once more; and I hurl my shame from me! . . .

MARCO.

My son, I know not what your intentions may be, and no one has the right to intrude upon a grief like yours. . . . Words cannot soften it, and I can well understand that the happiness which it has caused, which surrounds you on every side, can only embitter it, and render it more poignant. . . . The city is saved, but we almost regret the salvation which has cost you so dear; and we sink our heads before you who have had to bear the whole burden.

. . . And yet, could we recall yesterday, I should still have to act as I did, mark out the same victims, and plead for the same injustice ; for the man who would be just is compelled all his life sorrowfully to choose between two or three acts of varying injustice. . . . I know not what to say to you ; but if this voice of mine that once you loved could for the last time reach your heart, I would beg of you, my son, not blindly to follow the first counsels of anger and grief. . . . Wait, at least, until the dangerous hour be past which impels us to utter words that cannot be recalled. . . . Vanna will soon be here. Do not judge her to-day. Do nothing irrevocable. . . . For all that one does and says beneath the empire of an overpowering grief is so naturally, so cruelly, irrevocable ! . . . Vanna will return, rejoicing, despairing. . . . Do not reproach her. . . . If you do not feel yourself strong enough to speak to her as you will speak after many days, let some time pass before you see her. . . . For in us poor creatures, who are merely the playthings of irresistible forces, there resides so much goodness, and justice, and wisdom,

in the years that pass; and the only words that count, that we must eagerly grope for when misfortune blinds us, are those that we shall pronounce when full understanding has come, when we have forgiven and once more begun to love. . . .

GUIDO.

You have finished? It is well. This is no longer the hour for honeyed phrases, nor is there any one here to-day whom they still can deceive. . . . I have suffered you, and for the last time, to say what you had to say; for I was curious to know what your wisdom could offer me in exchange for the life it has so effectually ruined. . . . See what it gives me! To wait, to be patient, to accept, forget, to pardon and weep! . . . Well, no! That does not suffice! . . . I had rather not be wise, and get rid of my shame! Words cannot do this for me. . . . And as for my intentions, they are very simple—I shall act as you would have urged me to act but a few years ago. A man has taken Vanna from me; Vanna is no longer mine while this man exists. For I, you see,

am guided by other rules than those that govern the verb and the adjective. I obey the great law before which every man bends whose heart is alive within him. . . . Pisa has food now, weapons; she can eat, she can fight; very well, I claim my share. From this day onwards her fighting men are mine, or, at least, the best of them—those I myself recruited and paid for, out of my purse. I have discharged my duty to Pisa—now I demand my own. These men shall not go back to her until they have done what I in my turn have now the right to exact. . . . As for the rest—for Vanna—I forgive her, or shall forgive her when this man has ceased to be. . . . She has been deceived, she has been led astray; but, at least, there was heroism in what she did. . . . The foulest advantage was taken of her mercy, her greatness of soul. . . . Be it so. . . . To forget may be impossible; but at least this deed of hers may fade so remotely into the past that it shall hide itself from the love that seeks it. . . . But there exists one creature whom I shall never behold without shame and horror. . . . A man is here whose sole mission in life

was to be the guide, the prop, of a great and noble happiness. He has become its enemy, and its scourge; and there shall happen before you all a thing that is terrible and yet is just. . . . You shall see a son, who, in a world for a moment out of gear, judges his own father, denies him, and curses him; thrusts him from his presence, despises and hates him! . . .

MARCO.

Curse me, my son, but pardon her. . . . If there be in this heroic act that has saved so many lives a fault that cannot be pardoned, then is that fault all mine, but the heroism hers. . . . My advice was good; but advice was easy for me, who bore no share in the sacrifice; and to-day, when it deprives me of all that I hold dearest in the world, it seems still better to me than it did before. . . . I have no right to quarrel with your judgment; when I was younger I should have judged like you. . . . I go, my son, and you shall see me no more; I can well understand that my presence is odious to you, and yet I shall try to see you again without being seen by you. . . . And since I

depart, scarce daring to hope that I may live to see the hour when you will pardon the wrong I have done you—for my own past reminds me that pardon comes slowly when one is still in the prime of life—since I leave you thus, let me, at least, be convinced that I take with me all your hatred and bitterness, all your cruel memories; and that none will remain for her who is to come. . . . Beyond this I have but one prayer. . . . Let me, and for the last time, see her throw herself into your arms. . . . Then I shall go without a murmur, without deeming you unjust. . . . It is good that in human sorrow the oldest should take on his shoulders all that he can bear; seeing that he has but few steps before him ere his burden shall fall aside. . . .

[Already during MARCO'S last words, a vague and mighty murmur has been heard from without. In the silence that follows this noise increases, drawing nearer and becoming more and more distinct. First there is an expectant stir, then still distant shouts of a crowd rushing from point to point.

Soon the vague cries take form, and one hears from all sides, more and more clearly, repeated a thousand times, "Vanna, Vanna, our Monna Vanna! Glory to Monna Vanna, Vanna, Vanna, Vanna!"

MARCO.

(Rushing to the porticos that open on to the terrace.) It is Vanna! . . . She returns! . . . She is there! . . . They acclaim her; they acclaim her! Listen, listen!

[BORSO and TORELLO follow him to the terrace, while GUIDO remains alone, leaning against a pillar and looking straight before him. All this time the noise from without becomes louder and draws rapidly nearer.]

MARCO.

(On the terrace.) Ah, see! The square, the streets, the windows, the trees, are all black with waving heads and arms! The roofs, the tiles, the leaves, would seem to be changed into men! . . . But where is Vanna? . . . I see only

a cloud that shuts and opens. . . . Borso, my poor eyes play me false and betray my love. . . . Old age and tears are blinding them. . . . They cannot see the one creature they yearn for. . . . Where is she, where is she? . . . Which way must I go to meet her? . . .

BORSO.

(*Holding him back.*) No; do not go down, the people are wild, they have lost all control. They are mad with excitement, women are fainting, men trodden under foot! . . . Besides, it is useless; she comes, there she is, there she is! . . . See, she raises her head! . . . She sees us. . . . She is hurrying to us! Ah, she looks up and smiles! . . .

MARCO.

You see her, but I cannot! . . . These moribund eyes of mine can distinguish nothing! . . . For the first time I curse the old age that has taught me so much, and now hides this one thing from me! . . . But you who can see her, tell me how does she look? . . . Can you see her face?

BORSO.

She returns in triumph. . . . She seems to shine on the people. . . .

TORELLO.

But who is the man who is walking by her side?

BORSO.

I know not. . . . I never have seen him, he hides his face. . . .

MARCO.

Hark, how they shout! . . . The whole palace trembles; the flowers fall from the vases on to the steps. . . . The very flagstones seem to be rising beneath us to sweep us along in this overpowering gladness. . . . Ah, I begin to see. . . . They are close to the gates! The crowd divides. . . .

BORSO.

Yes, before Vanna. They are making a lane for her, a lane of triumph, of love. . . . In her path they throw flowers, palm leaves, jewels.

. . . Mothers hold out their children for her to touch; men stoop to kiss the stones her feet have trodden. . . Be careful, they are too near us. They are mad with joy. . . If they reach these steps we shall all be swept away. . . Ah, it is well! The guards are rushing from the other side to bar the entrance! . . . I will give orders to shut out the people and close the gates, if there be yet time. . . .

MARCO.

No, no! Let joy blossom here as it blossoms in the people's hearts! It is their vast love that speaks—let it do what it will! They have suffered enough! . . . Now that salvation has come let no barrier hold them back! Ah, my poor brave people, I, too, am drunk with joy, I raise my voice with yours! . . . Ah, Vanna, my Vanna! Is it you whom I see on the step? . . . (*He rushes forward to meet VANNA, but BORSO and TORELLO hold him back.*) Come, Vanna, come! They are keeping me back! They are alarmed at this mighty joy! Come, Vanna, come! More

beautiful than Judith, and purer than Lucrece! . . . Come! . . . Here, in the midst of the flowers! (*He runs to the marble vases and seizes handfuls of flowers that he hurls to the foot of the stairs.*) I, too, have flowers with which to greet the light! I, too, have lilies, laurels, and roses with which to crown glory!

[*The clamour becomes more and more delirious. VANNA, accompanied by PRINZIVALLE, appears on the top of the steps, and throws herself into MARCO'S arms. The crowd invade the palace stairs and the terrace; but, nevertheless, remain at a certain distance from the group formed by VANNA, PRINZIVALLE, MARCO, BORSO, and TORELLO.*

VANNA.

My father, I am happy. . . .

MARCO.

(*Holding her close to him.*) And I, too, my child, since I behold you again! . . . Let me

look at you through my tears. . . . I see you more radiant than had you descended from the depths of the sky, that now acclaims your return! . . . The horrible foe has not been able to rob your eyes of their light, or a single smile from your lips! . . .

VANNA.

Father, I will tell you. . . . But where is Guido? . . . He must be the first to hear—to be comforted, for how can he know?

MARCO.

Vanna, Vanna, he is there. . . . Come. . . . Me he repels, and justly, perhaps, but there is forgiveness for you, for your glorious fault; and I yearn to see you sink into his arms, that my last glance may fall upon your love. . . .

[GUIDO *steps forward to VANNA. She is about to speak—to throw herself into his arms—but GUIDO, with a brusque movement, stops and repels her, and addresses himself to those round about him.*

GUIDO.

(In a strident and imperious voice.) Go, all! . . .

VANNA.

No, no! They must wait! . . . Guido, I must tell you; I must tell them all. . . . Guido, listen!

GUIDO.

(Stopping her and pushing her back, raising his voice in growing anger.) Do not come near me, do not touch me! *(He advances towards the crowd which has invaded the hall, but now recoils before him.)* Have you not heard me? I bade you go! Leave us! You are the masters in your own homes, but here I rule! Borso, Torello, summon the guard! Ah! I see what it means! You have had your food, and now you would feast your eyes on this merry spectacle! . . . No, no, you have meat and wine; I have paid for you all; is that not enough? Go, I tell you! *(Silent movement in the crowd, which slowly disperses.)* Let

none venture to linger! (*He seizes his father violently by the arm.*) You, too! You, above all! You more than the others, since the fault is yours! You shall not see my tears! I desire to be alone. Lonelier than the tomb, to know what I have to know! (*Seeing PRINZIVALLE, who has not stirred.*) And you? . . . Who are you who stand there like a veiled statue? . . . Are you death, or shame? Have you not understood that I told you to go? . . . (*He snatches a halberd from a guard.*) Must I drive you hence with this halberd? . . . You touch your sword? . . . I, too, have a sword, but have other uses for it. . . . Henceforth it serves against one man, and one man alone. . . . What veils are those that hide your head? . . . I am in no mood for a masquerade. . . . You make no answer. . . . I ask who you are? . . . Wait——

[*He approaches and is about to tear away the bandages. VANNA rushes between and stops him.*

VANNA.

Do not touch him! . . .

GUIDO.

(*In amazement.*) Vanna, what, Vanna?
Whence comes this sudden strength?

VANNA.

It is he who saved me. . . .

GUIDO.

Hah! He saved you. . . . When it was
too late. . . . A noble action, truly. . . . It
would have been better . . .

VANNA.

(*Feverishly.*) But let me tell you, Guido, I
implore you! One word, but one word! . . .
He saved me, he spared me, respected me! . . .
He comes here with me, under my protec-
tion. . . . I have given my word, your word,
ours! . . . You are angry now, but listen to
me; only listen! . . .

GUIDO.

Who is this man?

VANNA.

Prinzivalle. . . .

GUIDO.

Who? . . . What? . . . He, that man?
That man Prinzivalle!

VANNA.

Yes, yes! He is your guest! He puts himself into your hands! It is he who has saved me, Guido. . . .

GUIDO.

(After a moment's stupor, with growing exaltation and vehemence that render it impossible for VANNA to interrupt him.) Ah, this, my Vanna! . . . Ah, this falls on my soul like dew from the innermost heaven! . . . Ah, Vanna, my Vanna! . . . Yes, you are right; since it had to be done, that was the way to do it! Ah, I understand your stratagem now! Yes, I see it all! . . . But I did not know, I could not imagine! . . . There are women who

would have killed him, as Judith killed Holophernes! . . . But his crime is greater than that of Holophernes, and calls for a greater vengeance! . . . Therefore you brought him here; therefore you have led him into the midst of his victims, who now shall become his executioners! . . . Ah, the magnificent triumph! . . . He followed you meekly, tenderly; and did not suspect that the kisses you gave him were kisses of hatred! . . . Here he is, caught in a trap! . . . Yes, you were right! To have killed him down there, alone in his tent, after his horrible crime—that would not have sufficed! . . . A doubt would have remained, we should not have seen him. . . . All had known of the abominable compact; it was needful, therefore, that all should know the price to be paid for such treachery! . . . But how did you do it? . . . It is the greatest triumph that ever a woman . . . Ah, you shall tell them! (*He rushes to the terrace and shouts at the top of his voice.*) Prinzivalle! Prinzivalle! The enemy is here! We hold him!

VANNA.

(*Clinging to him and trying to keep him back.*) No, no! Listen! Listen, Guido, I implore you! Guido, Guido, you are wrong!

GUIDO.

(*Shaking himself free, and shouting still louder.*) Let me go! You shall see! They must all of them know, all! (*Shouting to the crowd.*) Come back, all of you! You may, you must! . . . And you, too, my father! You who are crouching there behind the pillars, as though expecting a god to spring forth to repair the wrong you caused, and restore me my happiness! Come back! This is joy, joy! There has been a great miracle! I want the very stones to hear what has happened! I need skulk in corners no longer—that is all over—I shall go hence purer than the purest, richer than those who have lost nothing! Ah, now you can acclaim my Vanna! I acclaim her with you, and louder than you all!

[*The people hasten on to the terrace, he drags them into the hall.*]

GUIDO.

This time you shall have a spectacle! There is a justice, after all! . . . Ah, I knew it well, but could not believe that it could act so promptly! . . . I thought years and years must pass; that I should have to spend my life seeking my foe, in towns, in forests, in mountains! And, see, suddenly he springs up before me here, in this very room, on these steps, in front of us! An overpowering miracle! . . . But we shall hear. . . . It is Vanna has done this! . . . And there shall be justice! (*To MARCO, whom he seizes by the arm.*) You see that man? . . .

MARCO.

Yes; who is he?

GUIDO.

You have seen him before. . . . You have spoken to him. . . . You were his complaisant messenger. . . .

[PRINZIVALLE *turns his face to MARCO, who recognises him.*

MARCO.

Prinzivalle! [*Movement in the crowd.*]

GUIDO.

Yes, yes, it is he; there is not the least doubt. . . . Come nearer. Look at him, touch him! He may have some new message to send, perhaps. . . . Ah, he is no longer the magnificent Prinzivalle! But for him there shall be no pity. . . . He took, by a vile and monstrous artifice, the one thing in the world that I could not give; and now he is come to me! He has been brought hither by justice, by a stratagem more marvellous than justice, to ask of me the one recompense I can accord. . . . Am I not right to call it a miracle? Come nearer, nearer! Have no fear, he cannot escape! And yet, see that the doors are shut; we must not allow another miracle to snatch him from us. . . . We shall not deal with him at once. . . . There shall be prolonged pleasures in store for him. . . . Ah, you, my brothers, to whom he caused so much suffering; you whom he sought to massacre, whose wives and

children he sold into slavery, look at him now! Yes, this is he; and he is mine, he is yours, he is ours, I tell you! . . . He has made you suffer, but what has your suffering been compared with mine? . . . He shall be yours, very soon. . . . My Vanna has led him to us, that our vengeance may blot out our shame! . . . (*Addressing the crowd.*) Stand witness, all of you! There must not be one shadow of doubt. . . . Have you thoroughly realised what a miracle of heroism this is? . . . That man took Vanna from me. . . . I was helpless, I could do nothing: you sold her. . . . I have curses for none. . . . The past is past. . . . You had the right to prefer your life to my poor happiness. . . . But Vanna, my Vanna, has known how to build love anew with the thing that had killed it. . . . You destroyed; she has recreated. . . . Vanna has done it! . . . She is greater than Lucrece or Judith, Lucrece who killed herself, and Judith who slew Holofernes! Ah, that, truly, would have been too mild, too simple, too silent! . . . Vanna does not slay in a closed tent: she brings the victim to us, alive, and offers him to us all! . . . And

how has she done this? . . . Listen, she will tell! . . .

VANNA.

Yes, I will tell you; but it is all quite different. . . .

GUIDO.

(*Stopping her and throwing his arms round her.*) Let me kiss you first, before them all. . . .

VANNA.

(*Thrusting him violently back.*) No, no! Not yet! . . . No, no, never again if you will not hear me! Listen, Guido! I speak of an honour more real, of a happiness greater than those that are blinding you! Ah, I am glad they have all returned! They will hear me, perhaps, before you will: they will understand before you understand! Listen, Guido! . . . You shall not touch me until you know. . . .

GUIDO.

(*Interrupting her, and again trying to embrace her.*) Yes, yes, I know—but first of all I will . . .

VANNA.

Listen, I tell you! In all my life I have never lied, but to-day I am telling the profoundest truth, the truth one speaks only once, that brings life or death in its train. . . . Listen; and look at me well; look at me as though you had never seen me before this hour, which is the first, the only one when you truly can love me as I wish to be loved. . . . I speak to you now in the name of the life we have lived together; in the name of all that I am, of all that you are to me! . . . Be capable of believing what, perhaps, can be scarcely believed. . . . I was in this man's power. . . . I had been handed over to him: he did not come near me, he did not touch me. . . . I come from his tent as from the home of a brother. . . .

GUIDO.

Why?

VANNA.

Because he loves me. . . .

GUIDO.

Ah! so that was what you had to say to us! That was the miracle? . . . Yes, yes, at your

very first words I saw there was something strange. . . . It was only a flash, and I paid no heed. . . . I thought that the trouble, the horror had . . . But I see now that we must look into it. . . . So he did not come near you, you say; he did not touch you? . . .

VANNA.

No.

GUIDO.

Not even kiss you?

VANNA.

I gave him one kiss on the brow, which he returned.

GUIDO.

And you can tell this to me! . . . Vanna, Vanna, has this fearful night driven you mad?

VANNA.

I tell you the truth.

GUIDO.

The truth! Great God! it is that, and that alone, that I seek! But the truth must be

human. . . . What! a man who betrays his country, ruins his life, sets all the world against him for ever—and does all this that you should go to his tent alone—this man demands but a kiss on the brow; and comes to us here with you to make us believe it? . . . No, no; we must be just, and not gibe too much at misfortune. . . . If this was all that he asked, why inflict so much misery upon our whole people? And flood me with such despair? . . . This night has lasted ten years: I have scarcely survived it! . . . Ah, had this been all he sought he could have saved us without this torture! . . . We should have welcomed him like a god, like a deliverer! You shake your head. . . . See, the people shall judge, the people shall answer. (*Addressing the crowd.*) Have you heard? I know not why she has said these things; but what she has said is said, and you shall be judges. . . . You will believe her, perhaps, since she has saved you. . . . If you believe her, speak. . . . Let those who believe her step out from the crowd! . . . Let them come to us here, and give the lie to poor human reason! . . . Let them come, all those

who believe! . . . I am anxious to look at them, and see what sort of men they are! . . .

[MARCO *alone stands forth from the crowd. One hears only faint, dim, and indistinct murmurs.*

MARCO.

(Rushing forward.) I believe her!

GUIDO.

You! You are their accomplice. . . . But the others, the others, where are the rest who believe? . . . *(To VANNA.)* Have you heard? The people you saved shrink from the laughter that would burst from every corner of the hall. . . . The few who murmured have not dared to show themselves, and I—

VANNA.

They have no cause to believe me; but you, you who loved me!

GUIDO.

Ah, I who loved you should therefore become your dupe! No, no! Now listen to me! I

speak to you calmly, I have ceased to be angry. . . . I have gone through too much, I begin suddenly to feel old. . . . No, I am not angry. . . . There is no anger left in me—something else will take its place, I suppose—old age, madness, I know not yet. . . . At present I look, I search, I grope in myself, to discover the happiness that once was mine. . . . I have one hope, one hope alone; a hope so frail that I scarcely can grasp it. . . . A word would destroy it; and yet, in my despair, I must make the attempt. . . . Vanna, I was wrong to call back the crowd before knowing. . . . I should have remembered how galling it must be to you to proclaim to them all that that monster had caused you to suffer. . . . Yes, I should have waited until we were alone; then you would have confessed the truth, the horrible truth. But I know it, alas! and the others all know. Of what avail to hide it, Vanna? . . . It is too late. . . . There is no help for it now; and you, too, must understand. . . . In moments like these reason is incapable of—

VANNA.

Look at me, Guido; all my loyalty, all my strength and my truth are in my eyes now as I speak! . . . The truth, the truth, believe it! . . . He did not touch me.

GUIDO.

Good! It is good. It is very good! Now I know all, and all is gone from me. . . . Yes, it is the truth; or rather, it is love. Ah, I understand, you seek to save him. I did not realise that the woman I loved could change so quickly. But not that way can he be saved! (*He raises his voice.*) Hear me, all of you! I will for the last time swear an oath. . . . To restrain myself now demands super-human effort; my hold on myself is weakening. I make one final effort, there is one moment yet before I break down. . . . That moment I will not lose. . . . Can you hear me, you all; or is my voice grown too weak? Come nearer, nearer! . . . You see this woman, that man; they love each other. . . . Well. Now hear me. I am weighing all my words as scrupulously as one weighs the medicine given to

the dying. . . . These two shall go from me here, with my consent, shall go freely, unmolested, untouched, unharmed. They shall take with them whatever they choose. You shall open your ranks to afford them passage. You shall strew their path with flowers, if it so please you. They shall go whithersoever their love may guide their footsteps; and, all I ask in exchange, is that this woman shall first of all tell me the truth, the only possible truth. . . . That is the one thing left to me now that I can still love in her. . . . I demand the truth that she owes me, in exchange for what I will give her. . . . You understand, Vanna? you have only one word to say. . . . All here are witness. . . .

VANNA.

I have told you the truth. . . . He did not touch me. . . .

GUIDO.

It is well. You have spoken—you have condemned him. Now there is nothing more to be done. (*He calls the guards and points to PRINZIVALLE.*) That man belongs

to me; take him and bind him; thrust him into the lowest dungeon beneath this hall. I shall go with you. (*To VANNA.*) You will never see him again; but on my return I shall report to you his last words. . . .

VANNA.

(*Throwing herself in the midst of the guards, who are seizing PRINZIVALLE and leading him away.*) No, no! I have lied, I have lied! (*To GUIDO.*) Yes, what you say is true! (*Pushing the guards away.*) Go, you must not take what is mine! For he is mine, he belongs to me, not to you! To me alone! It is for me to punish—the coward who when I was helpless, defenceless . . .

PRINZIVALLE.

(*Trying to drown her voice.*) She lies! She lies! She lies to save me, but torture me as you will——

VANNA.

Be silent! (*Turning to the crowd.*) He is afraid! (*Approaching PRINZIVALLE, as though to tie his hands.*) Give me cords, give me

chains, and irons! Now that I dare speak out my hatred, it is I who shall bind him, I who brought him here! (*Whispering to PRINZIVALLE as she ties his hands.*) Be silent! He saves us, be silent! He has joined us. I belong to you, I love you! I love you, my Gianello! I put these chains on you, but I shall guard you, and free you! We two shall fly together! (*Shouting as though enforcing silence upon PRINZIVALLE.*) Be silent! (*Addressing the crowd.*) He pleads for mercy! (*Uncovering his face.*) Look at his face; it was my dagger, my dagger inflicted that wound! Look at him! He, the coward, the monster! (*Seeing that the guards make a movement as though to remove PRINZIVALLE.*) No, no, leave him to me! He is my victim, my prey! It is I who have bought him! He belongs to me!

GUIDO.

Why did he come, and why did you lie to me?

VANNA.

(*Hesitating and picking her words.*) Why I lied. . . . I scarcely know, I did not want to

say. . . . Ah well, I must tell you now. . . . There are times when one scarcely knows what one does, and is groping in the dark. . . . Yes, you shall know, you shall know, for now I have torn away the veil. . . . It was the thought of your love, of your despair, that alarmed me. . . . But I will tell you. (*In a calmer voice and with more assurance.*) No, no, I had not the idea you speak of. . . . I did not bring him here that we two, you and I, should be publicly avenged in the midst of a crowd; my idea, perhaps, was less noble, but my love for you prompted me. . . . I yearned to inflict a cruel death upon him, but was anxious also that the horrible memory of this horrible night should not weigh upon you to the end of your days. . . . It was my intention to revenge myself in the dark. . . . To inflict a slow, lingering death upon him. . . . Do you see. . . . Kill him slowly, little by little, till his blood falling drop by drop, should have wiped out his crime. . . . You would never have known the awful truth, and there would have been no spectre between us. . . . I feared, I confess, that the memory of this would lessen your love

for me. . . . I was foolish, I know. . . . It was mad to expect you to believe. . . . But now you shall learn all. . . . (*Addressing the crowd.*) Hear me, and you shall judge me! What I said before I said for Guido's sake, for the sake of our love. . . . Now I shall tell you all. . . . I tried to kill that man; I wounded him, as you see. . . . But he disarmed me. . . . Then I thought of a deeper revenge, and I smiled on him; and he, the fool, had faith in my smile. . . . And now he is here in his tomb, that I myself shall seal down. . . . I kissed him, and he believed in my kiss; and he followed me, like a lamb. . . . And I hold him now in my hands, and my hands shall close down on him! . . .

GUIDO.

(*Approaching.*) Vanna! . . .

VANNA.

Look at me well! . . . So mad is this man, he believed me at once when I said "Prinzivalle, I love you!" . . . Ah, he would have followed me down to the heart of hell! . . . And now he is my man, he is mine, before God and the

world! I have won, I have bought him! . . .
(*She totters and supports herself against the column.*) Take care, I fall. There is too much joy now, in the thought of the vengeance to come! (*To MARCO.*) Father, I entrust him to your care, till I am stronger. . . . You shall take charge of him, find a prison for him, a profound dungeon into which no one shall enter. . . . And give me the key, I must have the key, I want it at once. No one shall touch him, go near him; he belongs to me, to me, he is mine, I alone shall punish. . . . Guido, he belongs to me! (*Stepping towards MARCO.*) Father, he is mine, you shall answer for him! (*She looks fixedly at him.*) You understand, you are his guardian. You are responsible for him; not a hand shall approach him, and when I go to him he shall be as he is, now that I give him to you. (*PRINZIVALLE is taken away.*) Fare you well, my Prinzivalle! Ah, we shall meet again!

[*While GUIDO is in the midst of the soldiers, who brutally remove PRINZIVALLE, VANNA screams, totters, and falls into the arms of MARCO, who rushes forward to support her.*

MARCO.

(Rapidly, in a low voice, bending over VANNA as she lies in his arms.) Yes, Vanna, I understand; I understand your falsehood. You have achieved the impossible. . . . It is just and very unjust, like all the things that one does . . . and still it is life that is right. . . . Collect yourself, Vanna; you will have to lie again, since he refuses to believe. . . . *(Calling GUIDO.)* Guido, she asks for you. . . . Guido, she is coming to herself. . . .

GUIDO.

(Rushing up and taking her in his arms.) My Vanna! See, she smiles! . . . Vanna, tell me! . . . I never doubted. . . . Now it is over, and all will be forgotten—wiped away in our good revenge. . . . It was all a bad dream. . . .

VANNA.

(Opening her eyes, and speaking in a feeble voice.) Where is he? Yes, yes, I know, I remember. . . . Give me the key. . . . The key of his prison; none but myself must . . .

GUIDO.

The moment the guards come back they shall bring the key to you, and all shall be as you wish. . . .

VANNA.

I want it for myself alone. So that I may be quite sure, and that no one else . . . Yes, it has been a bad dream . . . but the beautiful one will begin. The beautiful one will begin. . . .

CURTAIN.

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